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HISTORY

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PLAINFIELD

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HISTORY
of
PLAINFIELD
by
Howard G. Lapsley

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FOREWORD

This history of Plainfield, New Jersey was first printed in the Plainfield Daily Press, March 1913. Subsequently it was produced in pamphlet form; all copies of the first edition disappeared long ago. During the intervening years repeated requests for copies seem to justify this second writing.

The original purpose is again the present one: to supply the lads and lasses who have been born here with a bit of historical background. Since the first printing so much history has been made, some of it good and so much of it bad, that the original has been amplified especially as to the changes which have occurred since 1912-1913. A comparison of 1912 with 1942 is interesting if not startling. . . .

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The HISTORY of PLAINFIELD

It is claimed, and with good reason, that New Jersey was inhabited about 150,000 years ago. Biblical history covers a period of only some 6,000 years. The sands of time have effaced the records of man as effectively as age vanquishes memory. The history of the world antedating the Biblical period forms one of the enormous speculative gaps in this world's story wherein the historian has not even threads of legend to guide him.

PREHISTORIC NEW JERSEY

In the valley of the Delaware near Trenton, human skulls, mastodon tusks and many thousand implements have been unearthed. It is the circumstance governing the finding of these things which warrants the statement that New Jersey was inhabited many thousands of years before man began to leave any permanent record of his existence.

Proof of this prehistoric population is that these discoveries were made in banks of gravel at various depths showing no human agency. These banks of gravel are conclusively attributed to the action of glaciers which covered the greater part of eastern United States. It is geologically certain that these skulls and tools were deposited as and where they were by the southerly drift of these glaciers.

The approximate date of these glacial drifts is established by astronomical calculation, which shows that at least 150,000 years have elapsed since this unknown people, whose remains were eventually buried by glacial action, lived here.

Plainfield is situated on what was once the terminal of a glacier as all land about shows evidence of having been deposited by the action of the melting ice.

From prehistoric speculation covering an extinct and unknown people, we must jump over wide intervals of time to the documentary evidence of the first white men who set foot in America. The degree of civilization reached by the American Indian was too low to allow of any historical record. What is known of the Jersey Indian we know from written observation of the white men who first entered the country.

INDIAN COUNCILS

In tribal councils, the chiefs and elders did the talking and those who know Indians also know they were not given to verbose oratory. A few tribes even circumscribed their orators by a clever physical limitation. They knew full well that any man with a "gift for gab," could talk a long time if he stood on his two feet. They also knew that any man standing, balanced on one foot, cannot stand and talk forever, or even to the point of boredom of his listeners. So they limited oratory to the "one foot speech." Our modern councils and legislative halls would be badly crippled under this parliamentary by-law.

Women of all races have excellent memory for details. While the Indians were in council, the women stood in the rear rows, to take the place of secretarial-historians, but solely by means of what they heard, so that Indian history and record became a matter of female memory. While they lived, the memory system of the women was probably as perfect as it is today but when they died, history and record reverted to legend.

LEGEND OF THE DELAWARE GAP

One of the most interesting lost legends of the Jersey Indian tribes might, if true, upset some of the scientific findings concerning the deeply buried skulls and tools in the lower valley of the Delaware River.

According to their old story, an immense lake existed at the headwaters of the river. What tribe or chief transgressed, is lost in the mists of legend. However, the Gods were angry and trod on the lower end of the lake and the waters rushed to the sea and the lake was no more.

If one examines the Delaware Water Gap, it certainly looks as if it had been stepped on and one may also visualize an immense lake, filling the upper reaches of the Delaware, if what is now the Gap had at some time been a dam and waterfall. One may also well imagine that the resulting flood could have washed skulls and tools downstream and covered them deep in sand and gravel if such a dam was destroyed. Whether the old legend is right or wrong, the Gap of today is an interesting speculation on the past.

INDIANS OF NEW JERSEY

The story of the aboriginal Indian is lost behind the mists of legend. The Indians of New Jersey belonged to the Algonquin family and their tribe division was the Delaware or Lenni-Lenape, meaning when translated freely, "original people." However, these "original people" had been so thoroughly whipped by their blood-thirsty and ferocious neighbors, the Iroquois, that they were also known as women. It is said that when it came to devising methods and means of torture and cruelty the Iroquois made all other races that ever inhabited this earth appear like novices.

The Delaware Indians inhabiting this state on the coming of the white men, were a subject race, divided up into some score of small tribes known as Raritans, Hackensacks, Neversinks, etc.

NEW JERSEY IN 1648

The earliest important account and description we have of this territory is the report of a pilgrimage made here in 1648 by one writing anonymously as Beauchamp Plantagent. This report made to Lord Edmund, (Andros), Governor and Captain General of the province of New Albion, gives a "Direction for adventurers, with small stock, to get two for one and good land freely."

This first prospectus of the State goes on to describe, "That part of America or North Virginia lying about 39 degrees at Delaware Bay called the Province of New Albion, is scituate in the best and same temper, between too cold Germany and too hot Barbary."

Also from a personal account of one Robert Evelin, we read as follows: "I doe account all the Indians to be 800 and are in several factions, and all are extream fearful of a gun, neither do I conceive any great need of a fort or charge where there is no enemy. If my Lord Palatine will bring with him 300 men or more there is no doubt that he may do very well and grow rich for it is a most pure healthful air and such pure wholesome springs."

An addition to this same account goes on to say: "We find besides the Indian Kings by him (Robert Evelin) known and printed, in this province there is in all twenty-three kings or Chief Commanders and besides the eight hundred by him named there is at least twelve hundred under the two Raritan Kings on the North side, next to Hudson's River, therefore fair and far off is best with heathen Indians."

EXODUS OF THE INDIANS

It is assumed from this, our first known census of the Jersey Indians, that their total number was not much over two thousand and as the State covers 7,500 square miles, each one of them had plenty of hunting ground. Due to the smallness of their number and the fact of their defeat by the Iroquois, the Jersey Indians never gave the early white settlers any serious trouble. By 1758 the exodus to the West of the Alleghenies was practically complete. There were then only some 150 left here and strangely enough there are only about 200 in the State today.

INDIANS AT PLAINFIELD

Due to their migratory habits, it is very difficult to tell which particular tribes inhabited Plainfield. Remains of several encampments have been found along Greenbrook and also marks of a camping place on the lands now bounded by Park, Crescent and Watchung Avenues, all in the area of the old Cedarbrook, which is now hidden under concrete. Our actual knowledge of the Indians in this vicinity is very limited as their camps and burial places have not afforded many clues.

DISCOVERY OF NEW JERSEY 1609

Henry Hudson when he sailed into New York Bay on August 28, 1609, was the first white man to give us an account of New Jersey. Hudson sent John Coleman ashore on a scouting expedition. Coleman landed on Sandy Hook, was shot by the Indians and later buried near where he fell.

By 1651 a few Dutch settlers had drifted over from New Amsterdam and established themselves on the Achter Koll or what we now call Newark Bay. The Dutch settlements in Jersey however, were few and straggling and scarcely left any permanent impression on the State with the possible exception of Bergen county.

CAUSE OF COLONIZATION

During the middle of the 17th century the times in Great Britain were very troublous. Civil wars, lack of religious freedom, confiscation of property, and a general carelessness in the matter of beheadings,

turned the thoughts of many to the new country across the sea. Cromwell in England and MacKenzie and Claverhouse in Scotland, especially aided the settlement of New Jersey.

DUTCH LOSE THEIR HOLDINGS

Charles II was restored to the throne May 29, 1660. There had been peace between the Dutch and the English for ten years in which time the Dutch had been building up New Amsterdam. King Charles gave to his brother the Duke of York, the land lying between the Connecticut and Delaware Rivers, and as far west as the Pacific ocean. A secret expedition was fitted; still without any declaration of war New Amsterdam was captured without bloodshed on September 8th, 1664.

Thus by an absolutely unjustifiable grab England secured to herself the very heart of the Atlantic seaboard, which act subsequently gave her control of the continent.

New Amsterdam was renamed New York and Nicholls, commander of the Duke of York's fleet, became Governor Nicholls. He made several grants of land along Newark Bay to families from Jamaica on Long Island. In all some eighty settlers profited by these first British grants.

CARTERET AND BERKELEY

The Duke of York gave to George Carteret and Lord Berkeley of Stratton, all the land between the North and South Rivers, or as now called, the Hudson

and Delaware Rivers. East Jersey went to Carteret, and West Jersey to Berkeley. A line drawn from Atlantic City straight up through the State by way of Somerville will show approximately the respective portions. Carteret belonged to a prominent royalist family on the island of Jersey.

ELIZABETHTOWN

In August, 1665, Philip Carteret, a cousin of the proprietor, arrived here with several families and settled at Elizabethtown, the village being so named after Elizabeth, the wife of Sir George Carteret.

The maps were at this time always published in Latin. The island of Jersey being called Caesarea, consequently the colony was called Nova Caesaria, or in the vernacular, New Jersey. The proprietor offered settlers the most liberal concessions. The Governor was limited by a council and also by an assembly elected by the people. Land was sold very cheap and religious freedom promised.

Gabriel Thomas in an address (1698) setting forth the advantages and attractions of West Jersey, winds up by saying, "I have endeavored (by setting forth the great encouragements there are) to persuade the Poor, the Idle, the Lazy, and the Vagabonds of these Kingdoms and of Wales to hasten thither that they may live plentifully and happily."

The promise of religious freedom brought settlers from Haverhill, Newbury, New Haven, and other New England colonies of narrower views. Many of these settled in Union county.

WILLIAM PENN

Lord Berkeley, owner of the western half of the State, sold out his interests to two Quakers, John Fenwick and Edward Byllinge. John Fiske calls this transaction a pivotal point in American History as it brought William Penn to the New World. Penn took a deep interest in the settlement of West Jersey before he became more actively associated with his own colony of Pennsylvania.

DUTCH CAPTURE NEW JERSEY

In 1672 the Dutch and English became embroiled and a Dutch fleet of twenty-three ships which had been cruising about the West Indies sailed up the American coast and on August 9, 1673, captured New York much as the English had taken it from them scarce ten years before.

By the treaty of Westminster, signed the next year, the Dutch ceded back to the British the New Netherlands.

New Jersey was once again officially given back to Berkeley and Carteret and later West Jersey reverted to the Quakers.

All those holding proprietary rights in New Jersey agreed in 1702 to surrender their rights to Queen Anne. Their landed estates were not affected by this surrender. East and West Jersey were united as one, and thenceforth, until 1738, New Jersey was governed by the same Governor as New York but with its own distinct and independent assembly. By an Act of the year

1682—East Jersey was divided into four counties: Bergen, Essex, Middlesex and Monmouth. Plainfield was not then on the map but this area was part of Essex.

FIRST SETTLED BY THE SCOTCH

By 1685 there were seven families established on farms along the Cedarbrook: Fullerton, Johnstone, Forbes, Barclay, John and Thomas Gordon and Andrew Alexander. As their names betoken, these men with their families had emigrated from Scotland. At that time MacKenzie and Claverhouse were making the old country unpleasant for Presbyterians and it was because of their persecutions, that many of us are now Americans and Plainfielders.

Some of these Scots, being men of means, brought with them half a dozen servants and established good sized farms. A few letters, written by these early settlers, have been found, showing how pleased they were with the new country, especially with the abundance of game. Rather curious statements appear in these letters; one writes of "hunting wild horses," another says, "There is a Flee by the salt marshes, most troublesome in Summer." Our mosquitoes we know but the "wild horses" may have been some early type of Plainfield elk.

For many years Plainfield was nothing but farmland. Scotch Plains was a village marked on the early maps and a Baptist Church was started there in 1747, which was later the parent church of those established in New York City.

INDIAN TRAILS

Before the coming of the white man an Indian trail ran through Plainfield from the Hudson to the Delaware River. This trail was converted into the main stage line road between New York and Philadelphia.

Lazy men usually know their geography, they are experts at following lines of least resistance and the Indian was nothing, if not lazy. As a consequence, their major trails are either the highways we follow today, or very near them. When the fishing was good in one river and not the other, the tribes followed the fishing along their easy going trail, parallel to Greenbrook. This trail is now Front Street.

Similarly when they had a taste for shellfish and seafood they headed over another trail, which is now Woodland Avenue, toward Keyport and the coast. Indians really know geography.

The central plaza of Plainfield, lying between the City Hall and Crescent Avenue Church, is just an even 100 feet above sea level. The top spots on the Watchung Hills run about 500 feet and Woodland Avenue runs about 130 feet above sea level. All the early trails proved Indians did not like to climb hills and later civil engineers accepted the grades the Indians had selected as the best.

GRIST MILL AND MEETING HOUSE

By 1760 a grist mill had been built on Greenbrook near Watchung Avenue and by 1788 the Friends' Meeting House was built on the same street. These

two magnets of trade and religion were the nucleus of the village.

MILLTOWN

At this time the village acquired the name of Milltown, New Market was called Quibbletown and New Brooklyn, Towtown; mail was delivered through the postoffice at Scotch Plains.

POSTOFFICE

On April 1st, 1800, a postoffice was established here and by this recognizance of Uncle Sam, Plainfield may be said to have been officially born.

Originally Plainfield marked the limit of Elizabeth township, Essex county. In 1794 Westfield township was made separate so in 1800 Plainfield was part of Westfield. A monument showing the old Essex County line, is still standing on Woodland Avenue between Hillside Cemetery and the Country Club.

From the establishment of the postoffice here, the growth of the place was rapid and prosperous as the following description in Gordon's Gazetteer published in Philadelphia in 1834, will show:

PLAINFIELD IN 1834

"Plainfield—A large and thriving village of Westfield Township, Essex County, on Green Brook, the line between that and Somerset County, 65 miles from Philadelphia, 45 miles from Trenton, 20 miles south-

west from Newark, 16 miles from Elizabethtown, 25 from New York and 11 northeast from New Brunswick, on a plain of very level land between 2 and 3 miles wide and about 11 long. Contains 1 Presbyterian, 1 Baptist, and 1 Methodist church, 2 Friends Meeting Houses (Hicksite and Orthodox), 2 Grist Mills, 1 Saw Mill, 4 stores, 3 schools, 2 clergymen, 1 lawyer, 2 physicians, 2 taverns, 13 master hatters who manufacture about \$75,000 worth of hats annually, 5 master tailors employing 70 hands who work for the southern market, a fire engine and company, a mutual insurance company established in 1832, which in a few months executed policies to the amount of more than \$150,000, a Ladies' Library, an Apprentices' Library, a four-horse mail stage to N. Y. 3 times a week, and as often to Philadelphia, on alternate days runs through the village. The country around the town is rich, well cultivated and healthy, the water good and the society moral and religious and ambitious of improvement, the neighboring mountains about a mile north of the town afford an abundant supply of cheap fuel and screens the valley from the violence of the north and northwest winds and gives a very pleasing prospect to the S. and E. over a space of 30 miles."

HAT INDUSTRY

The development of Plainfield from a farming community to a place of some commercial importance was due to the hat making industry started here in 1808 by John Wilson. With the gradual decrease of the hat making trade here, Plainfield received a temporary stop to its progress.

FIRST NEWSPAPER

On January 12, 1837, the first issue of the "Plainfield Union and General Advertiser" appeared, published by a committee every Thursday morning in the village of Plainfield, opposite the Post Office, Jacob Overacre being printer and editor. Unfortunately this weekly gives us more national news than it does local news.

In an editorial under date of May 18, 1837, on the "State of Society," we find "The present period is emphatically the time which tries men's souls, mutual confidence in matters of commercial interest is about expiring." For several years times were very hard, specie payments stopped and the editor of Plainfield's first newspaper had a hard time keeping afloat.

STAGE COACH DAYS

On August 24, 1837, this advertisement appeared:

"Reduced Fare
By Stage and Steamboat
From Plainfield to New York
for only 5 Shillings
By Swift Sure Mail Line."

In September of the same year the fare was reduced to 3 shillings. These reductions of tariff forecasted the end of the stage road. The steam railroad was beginning to revolutionize transportation.

Transportation in stage coach days was pretty much in the lap of the weatherman. Plainfield was a way

station for one of the main New York-Philadelphia routes. Roads were bad to terrible. Many times enough passengers were not on hand to start the trip with a profit to the coach owner, so horses were reported lame and other excuses to delay the start. Some lines made the ninety mile journey in two days and on occasions it could be made in a day and a half with favorable weather. Even for the few wealthy men in the country, who had their own coach and four horse hitch, the going was none too easy.

COMING OF THE RAILROAD

The State of New Jersey chartered the Elizabeth-town and Somerville Railroad February 9, 1831. At this time there were three daily lines of stages from Easton to New York, one via Morristown and two via Plainfield. Additional charters issued by the States of New Jersey and Pennsylvania prepared the way for the Somerville and Easton Railroad. These two roads in conjunction would penetrate the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania. However, it was a good many years before these plans were carried out.

The first financial prospectus of this railroad states how offers were made to the railroad promoters, "to furnish coal and place it in company's cars on the railroad at 50c per ton, and it is not doubted that contracts for any quantity can be made for $37\frac{1}{2}$ c per ton." The charter issued by the State allowed the road to charge not more than 6c per mile per passenger or per ton of freight.

As the post road followed the Indian trail so the railroad followed the Road through or at least for the

present to Plainfield. On Wednesday, March 21, 1838, a notice of a Railroad meeting was made in the "Union" then under the editorship of Milton F. Cushing.

"The citizens of Plainfield and its vicinity are invited to attend a meeting at Jack Thorn's Long Room on Thursday evening next at early candle light, with a view to aid in concerting measures to assume the completion of the said Railroad as far as this village the ensuing season. Several gentlemen from Elizabethtown and Somerville are expected, who will give all necessary explanations and information. The great importance of the object it is hoped will ensure a general attendance."

In the next issue of the paper we find that "The meeting was large, influential and respectable," and unanimously resolved: "That in the opinion of this meeting it is highly important that the road should be completed as speedily as possible and that the company be solicited and encouraged to progress immediately with the work and that we will render all the aid in our power."

It is especially gratifying to learn that this meeting was respectable but it makes one anxious as to other meetings held in Jacob Thorn's Long Room, which it will be noted was the "Get Together" place in which Plainfield's future was determined.

In December another meeting was called "to properly plan a celebration for the completion of the Railroad." The issue of the "Union" telling about this celebration is missing so we are left to surmise that

perhaps the celebration included too much applejack to be respectable.

By 1839 trains were running regularly from Elizabethtown to Plainfield. From Elizabethport passengers were carried to New York by boat and from Plainfield to points West, goods and passengers were still carried by stage.

The railroad was soon extended to Bound Brook. This extension so increased the road's business that the superintendent, Mr. Elihu Harrison, was compelled to run four or five trains a day to care for the business.

In 1840 the running time from New York to Somerville was three hours. Today the same distance is made in about an hour.

In 1854 over 59,000 passengers were carried between New York and Plainfield. In 1861 the 12 mile ferry trip from Elizabethport to New York was proving tedious so the experiment of having passengers drawn over the New Jersey Central Railroad from Elizabeth to Jersey City was tried. The bridge over Newark Bay was started in 1863 and with the exception of straightening out the track between Scotch Plains and Dunellen in 1875, there have been few changes in Plainfield's railroad connections with New York.

Considerable space has been devoted to this story of the beginnings of the Central Railroad of New Jersey but the development of the steam railroad plays the leading part in the history of the United States, for without this development the country as it stands today would not be physically possible. It would take

a congressman from California six months to reach Washington except for this progress in transportation.

IMPORTANCE OF RAILROAD

The excessive enlargement of the Roman Empire soon transformed it into a despotism. The sameness of speech, blood and degree of civilization in a country of the extent of ours, is possible only by reason of the railroad and the opportunities it has made for social and commercial intercourse. Without the steel rails and the telegraph, the artificial arteries and nerves of this country, we would have seen the government blow up into fragments like the soap bubble, blown up till its thin shell loses power of cohesion.

The following newspaper items show us the state of Plainfield society about 1840.

"The New Jersey Railroad has discontinued running trains on the Sabbath."

"Though Plainfield is large enough to support a newspaper, six churches, three or four first rate hotels; it is not large enough to support a single grog shop."

At this time Washington Rock was the principal picnic ground. Political and holiday picnic parties were almost universally held at the Rock and sometimes as many as four thousand people journeyed there for the various events.

UNION COUNTY

By 1845 talk had begun of splitting up Essex County and naming this, the Southern end of it, Rock County, after Washington Rock. However the actual division

did not occur until March 19th, 1857 and then the new county was named UNION.

Ten years previously (March 4, 1847) Plainfield had been made a separate township; Robert Anderson being town-clerk; Charles Boice, Assessor; Daniel Bullman, Collector; Frazee Cole, Freeholder; Charles H. Stillman, Superintendent of common schools.

Plainfield was incorporated as a city in 1869. Job Male was the first Mayor and Nelson Runyon, City Clerk.

SUBURBAN GROWTH

The complete connection of the railroad with New York City started the growth of Plainfield as a town of suburban commuters. A large, old fashioned Hotel, The Park House, was built on Park Avenue at 8th Street, where number 734 now stands, in 1873. Five years later a big brick hotel was built on Belvidere Avenue. These two hotels drew many customers from New York, who later built homes here. The present Park Hotel is carrying on the tradition of hotel hospitality, which is a very necessary element in the growth of any city, with host Stender handling the city's inn responsibility excellently.

INVENTORS

Plainfield has more than its full share of inventors, whose work and production have put Plainfield on the map, even in the far corners of this Earth: Babcock, Benton, Pond, Potter, Birdseye, Hall, Cornwall, Hofheimer, Waldo, DeLeeuw, Moldenke, Conner, Kenney,

Hibbard, Scott, Stillman, Saunders, and Rushmore. Unfortunately the U. S. Patent Office has no cross index, showing the geographical location of inventors, so that it is difficult to give the complete list of inventors with their personal accomplishments but the above names have all made their mark and left their footprints on the sands of time.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

The fact that this town was the home of inventors, caused it to be among the first to adopt all the new facilities of creature comfort and better living, as soon as they appeared.

GAS

The Plainfield Gas Light Company was incorporated in 1857 and the plant was built in 1860 at the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and East Fourth Street. It continued in production until 1906. Now gas comes from Camden, N. J. via the Public Service Electric and Gas Company's transmission mains. Gas engineers have done an excellent job.

ELECTRICITY

Only four years after Thomas A. Edison opened his first generating plant in Pearl Street, New York, The Plainfield Electric Light Company started business, in 1886, at West Second Street and Madison Avenue. Electricity cost 20 cents per kilowatt hour and the outages were frequent, so that most homes were

equipped with double service gas and electric fixtures. Today (1942) the old generating plant is one of the Public Service Company's many substations. While the current now is generated in the Newark Area, the art of transmission has so improved, that Plainfield could be lighted from points as far away as Niagara Falls or Conowingo, Maryland.

From oil lamps to gas lights and from gas lights to electric lights were steps which quickly followed one another in Plainfield and the old barrel of kerosene in the cellar soon disappeared from every home. But in the pioneer days of electricity, the incandescent bulbs had a short life, and everything in the electrical field was viewed with suspicion. However a few hardy souls saw its future possibilities and ran wire to their homes. The first wired house in this city was the old Pittis house at 912 Central Avenue.

COMMUNICATION

The small boy of today has little idea of how very important the small boy of some fifty years back was in every village and town. There were practically no telephones, no bicycles and no automobiles. The small boy was the communication system and shoe leather had to be good, as messages were relayed by the boy on foot, and feet are not fast.

Communication by means of electricity was established here in 1862 when the Western Union Telegraph Company opened its office.

During the 80's a few Plainfield homes were equipped with ADT call service boxes. By turning a dial, a central office annunciator showed that a telegraph

messenger, hack, coupe, or doctor was wanted. How long this service continued and who operated it has been lost from the historical record.

In any event the telephone was on its way in and a one way call system could not compete with the two way telephone. The first telephone central station opened here on June 12th, 1883, with a list of fifteen subscribers, of whom Dr. O. L. Jenkins was No. 1. Even by 1886 there were only 120 subscribers, headed by Otto Arens and ending with the Zephyr Hook & Ladder Co.

At the start of this century, in 1900, the telephone was still uncommon in the large majority of houses and those who had them relayed important messages to their neighbors via the small boy, who was even then a fixture in the communication system of the town.

Now in 1941 there are practically 11,000 phones for the 13,000 Plainfield area families, so that news over the back fence is practically dead.

At the very birth of broadcasting in 1919 Mr. W. J. Buttfield built Radio Station WEAM and subsequently secured the first municipal broadcasting license issued in the United States. This station ended operation in 1928 when chain stations took over.

WATER SUPPLY

The earliest settlers here held high regard for the available supply of water, as a few feet beneath the surface of the earth there seemed to be a plentiful supply of clear, potable water. Every house had its

own independent well or pump. In the '90's houses were built with a sizable tank on the top floor and a twin cylinder pump, with a back and forth handle, on the first floor to feed the tank, which held a two or three days' supply for the household. The family handy man received 15 cents per hour for filling the tank. Most of the plumbing, due to the low tank pressure, was of lead pipe. Some of the older houses have lead pipe plumbing, still doing well after 70 years of service, but with a small tank to act as a reducer, to cut down the pressure from the street feed pipes.

The present water system, the Plainfield-Union Water Company, was first granted a charter by the State Legislature in 1869 but this charter was put on ice until 1890, when the company started to dig wells and lay water mains, after an expert with a hazel twig spotted water on what is now the 20 acre pumping area, near the Netherwood Station of the Central Railroad. The Water Company is a privately owned enterprise and the city has, from time to time, spent both time and money seeking to acquire it, or build its own system, but as there has never been an acute shortage of water, the issue has never had to be forced. About 140,000 people get their water supply from local wells.

The source of our very pure and potable water is problematical but there is one very significant clue to its origin; the fact that the underground flow is strong and in a Southwesterly direction. Therefore it is logical to go North or East to locate the source. Swinging N.E. 40 or 50 miles we strike one of the

most puzzling and interesting spots on the Atlantic Coast. Just a bit East and South of Sandy Hook, which would place it about 40 miles from Plainfield, is the Hudson Canyon. The off-shore depths are moderate but suddenly reach the edges of this Hudson Canyon and drop straight down to a depth of 1,200 fathoms. This Canyon under the sea is apparently the prehistoric mouth of the Hudson River which has been submerged by a past earthquake of great violence.

This mile deep gorge has in its walls and sides many fissures and crevices. Sea water flowing into these could then easily seep underground through sand and gravel, until it reached our water supply wells, fresh and potable.

Local water supply is obtained from the following stations: Netherwood—17 wells, 200-500' deep, 10-12" diameter, chlorinated. Clinton Avenue—2 wells, 283-300' deep, 8-12" diameter. New Orange Park—1 well, 246' deep, 8" diameter.

Our water filters through 200 feet even though it might be surface water and not from some under sea source, therefore why it is necessary to chlorinate it is not quite clear.

The North Jersey population is increasing so fast that adequate water supply of the future for some cities is going to be a big problem and this should be an engineering instead of a political problem. The question of water reserve should be brought frankly out into the open before some town is wrecked by a serious shortage.

MUHLENBERG HOSPITAL

Under the general subject of public utilities Muhlenberg Hospital has been reserved as the most important; started in the vestry meeting of Grace Church, it opened its doors on December 1st, 1881, with beds for a dozen patients, near the railroad, on Muhlenberg Place. It has since grown to the large establishment on Park Avenue. This hospital and its work are well known. The name it bears is less well known and as it is the greatest monument ever erected in this city to any man, let us then review the life of this great American whom we have honored.

Those who have worked for and contributed to Muhlenberg Hospital have done two notable things: they have maintained a repair shop for broken down human machinery and they have created a living, active monument to a great man. If he were alive, Dr. Muhlenberg would be quick to deny that he was great, good or notable, for he hated publicity and flattery. His life was spent in quiet but persistent work—creating many institutions.

Muhlenberg Hospital is more a monument to a spirit than it is to the man.

Dr. Muhlenberg was a doctor of divinity, not a doctor of medicine, but his practical sort of applied Christianity taught him that most broken souls were often in broken bodies, so while repairing the one was a good time to repair the other. A well man works—a sick man meditates.

Date and figures are unimportant in estimating a man's life and work. A mortuary record of Dr. Muhlenberg might say: William Augustus Muhlenberg,

born in Philadelphia, Sept. 16, 1796. Graduated "Third Honor" man University of Pennsylvania, 1815. Admitted to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church five years later. Founded the Church of the Holy Communion, Sixth Avenue at Twentieth Street, New York City. In 1846 there were three hospitals in New York City: "Ward's Island" devoted to immigrants, "Bellevue" devoted entirely to paupers, and "The New York Hospital" devoted mainly to seamen but with a few pay patients. Dr. Muhlenberg realized the necessity of greater hospital accommodations and established St. Luke's Hospital. After this hospital was well established he turned his attention to the upbuilding of a model village, St. Johnland, Long Island. He died April 8, 1877, and was buried at St. Johnland.

In his eighty years of activity as preacher, educator, and charity worker, Dr. Muhlenberg became known and recognized over the length and breadth of the United States and in Europe. Muhlenberg Hospital is a monument to a remarkable humanitarian life. His institutions were built only after years of effort and struggle, hardship and self-denial piled on self-denial.

In 1846, when he first conceived the plan of St. Luke's Hospital, he requested a collection for the purpose and received thirty dollars. Someone sarcastically asked when he expected to build. His answer was, "Never, if I do not make a beginning." Charity moved very slowly in the middle of the last century for it was not until 1858 or twelve years later that this man of tenacity opened the hospital. Twelve years of work plus thirty pieces of silver and the hospital became a reality.

During the cholera epidemic of 1849, while many were running away to the country, Dr. Muhlenberg worked right ahead in the midst of the slums and the cholera.

He was a great believer in church unity. In his hospital a Methodist Minister broke the rules of the institution, one day, by praying aloud in one of the wards. A nursing sister ran excitedly to the chief to report this breach of rules. He only said, "Hurry back, sister, and stop the prayer before it gets to heaven."

While the pioneers of this great country were building its cities, its railroads and the other material things, Dr. Muhlenberg was pioneering the great charitable spirit and feeling of the nation. His whole life was devoted to self-denial in behalf of others. Anyone who practices self-denial to help another is great. It is this spirit which has been mixed with the mortar of Muhlenberg Hospital.

SCHOOLS

In 1834 there were three schools in Plainfield. In 1847 Charles H. Stillman was appointed Superintendent of common schools, and under his enthusiastic leadership our public school system began to grow, not only here but throughout the State of New Jersey. Miss Julia Bulkley followed and then in 1892, Mr. Henry M. Maxson became superintendent of the then fast growing school system. Mr. Frederic W. Cook took over in 1926 and is still carrying on so that, in almost the span of a century, we have had only four

superintendents of schools. Taking the exuberance of youth into account, that is truly a remarkable record of patience, understanding and serenity of soul. It is also a wonderful testimonial to the high type of men composing our various Boards of Education and the effort they have made to keep our educational system remote from politics.

Buildings and grounds do not make schools. The value of education lies in the enthusiasm and zeal of the teacher to instill a love of learning in young, stubborn, and plastic minds. This crusading spirit, of passing on the torch of wisdom, has never been lacking in the teaching staffs of Plainfield's public schools. Our leading American universities have placed their seal of approval on the teacher-product of Plainfield.

In 1942 we have: 15 school buildings, 7 principals, 3 supervisors and 279 teachers, a 21 acre athletic field with two field houses, one for boys and one for girls.

Public school education is an immense and costly problem. Parents unable adequately to handle the discipline of one child dump all the ethical, moral and disciplinary training into the lap of their child's teacher. With 6,346 pupils the teachers may average two dozen to a class. Where the parent can't handle one problem the teacher is expected to handle 24 and that with serious restrictions on discipline. The parent problem is far worse than the pupil problem. Teachers can make progress with latently stupid children but can do little with dumb adults. Teachers can hardly be expected to fill up the mental and moral vacuums of home life.

The grade schools of Plainfield have at present a reasonable capacity but the High School with a seating

capacity of 1,450 and now overflowing with 1,900 students is an unreasonable situation. Dr. Galen Jones handles this overcrowded condition but naturally with great handicaps.

Supplementing the public school system Plainfield has two private schools: the Hartridge School for Girls and the Wardlaw School for Boys besides two parochial schools St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. Also the Drake Business College and Mount St. Mary's Academy and College, the VanEmburch School of Art and several teachers of music.

PLAINFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

We have seen by the record that in 1834 Plainfield had "A Ladies' Library" and also "An Apprentices' Library." Today we have but one, which was started by Job Male in 1883 in a building he built for the purpose, corner of Park Avenue and Eighth Street. A fireproof stack room was added in 1900 and the Andrew Carnegie addition was built in 1911.

Mr. Luke White, Jr., Librarian, and Miss Mildred J. Spicer, Assistant Librarian, are the able custodians, with several kindly helpers, of some 76,209 volumes; 9,879 maps and pictures, and 6,584 music scores.

The "Babcock Scientific Library," the "Tyler Library of American History" are two of the outstanding units of this collection of books. The library of music scores is one of the best in the State.

A very complete and liberal education, in almost any field of thought or culture, is waiting on the shelves of the Public Library for anyone who has the

ambition and desire to learn, and the reading rooms are really beautiful sanctums of study.

This institution is conclusive proof of one fact; there have been and still are, many American citizens bent on leaving this world a better place for living than they found it.

The number of churches and charitable institutions in this city testify to the spirit of benefaction which has prevailed here. The list of municipal benefactors is so large that it is difficult to treat adequately the matter in this history.

PLAINFIELD A PLACE OF PEACE

A history of a city which is able to emphasize peace instead of war is truly unusual. Plainfield has supplied its quota for every war fought by the United States, troops have passed to and fro through the city. Munitions have been manufactured here. But Plainfield has never been directly touched by war.

In the American Revolution the city was surrounded by war. There were battles at Bound Brook, Springfield, Monmouth, and encampments at Blue Hills, Jockey Hollow, Morristown, but the war passed it by as a battleground.

In the Civil War slavery had practically ceased to exist in the State by 1860 and opinion on the subject was lukewarm to tepid.

In the World War the city supplied its quotas of conscripts, and manufactured trucks, machine tools, 4.7 field guns and, unfortunately, under the aegis of some outsiders backed by foreign capital, some of

the worst airplanes ever made and sold to any government, even after the government had been duly notified and warned that the planes they were contracting for were worthless. The nearest this city ever came to war was a night and day of tremendous explosions when the loading plant at South Amboy blew up in 1918.

Even in the field of Capital and Labor Plainfield has had no war. This is primarily because our capital has lived here and our labor has lived here, and all sane men know that it doesn't make sense to live side by side and fight. Fly by night trouble makers, who are here today and gone tomorrow, are not popular with either the Plainfield capitalist or the Plainfield mechanic.

CITY GOVERNMENT

Plainfield Mayors — 1869-1942

Job Male	1869-1870
John H. Evans	1871-1872
Charles H. Stillman	1873-1874
John C. Sutphen	1875-1876
Job Male	1877-1878
Nathan Harper	1879-1880
L. V. F. Randolph	1881-1882
William B. Maxson	1883-1884
George Rockefeller	1885-1886
Job Male	1887-1888
Job Male	1889-1890
Alexander Gilbert	1890-1896

(Three successive terms.)

Charles J. Fisk	1897-1898
G. W. Rockfellow	1899-1900
Olin L. Jenkins, M.D.	1901-1902
Olin L. Jenkins, M.D.	1903-1904
James F. Buckle	1905-1906
Charles J. Fisk	1907-1908
Charles J. Fisk	1909-1910
George W. V. Moy	1911-1912
Percy H. Stewart	1913-1914
Leighton Calkins	1915-1920
Charles E. Loizeaux	1921-1924
James T. MacMurray	1925-1930
Martin B. Stutsman	1931-1932
C. Benson Wigton	1933-1934
Martin B. Stutsman	1935-1936
DeWitt D. Barlow	1937-1938
Harvey R. Linbarger	1939-1942

City Clerks — 1869-1942

Nelson B. Runyon	1869-1877
Wm. B. Smith	1878-1879
Oliver B. Leonard	1880-1882
Walter L. Hetfield	1883
Oliver B. Leonard	1884-1885
Richard Merritt	1886
Oliver B. Leonard	1887-1889
Jos. B. Coward	1890-1891
Frank W. Runyon	1892-1893
James T. MacMurray	1894-1916
John J. Carroll	1916-1925
George B. Wean	1925-1934
Fred Toegel	1934 to date

Under the above administrative officials, your author has no hesitation in saying: Plainfield has benefited by and received as clean government as has been enjoyed by any city in the United States. This statement is based on personal friendship or acquaintance with the last fifteen mayors of this city, and in spite of the innate cussedness of some of our political machinery.

True, there have been mistakes of administrative judgment but they have been honest errors. When a city the size of Plainfield can obtain the training, experience and character of our Mayors for an annual honorarium of \$300, and similar attributes in a majority of our 11 councilmen, who put in many hours of honest work, without any honorarium at all, that fact alone bespeaks the highest quality of American citizenship and leads to a dignity and honesty, far above the average of municipal government anywhere.

Practically all the breakdown in American politics is due to remote control. County, State, and Federal governments are not right under our noses (maybe fortunately so) and the further away they are, the looser they become in administration and the tighter in taxation.

In 1913 the State of New Jersey had a debt of \$156,550; now in 1942 the State debt is \$76,222,000.

A mere \$5,000 in our city budget may raise a storm while a few millions, in the distance, are spent without a ripple of protest.

POPULATION AND GROWTH

Schools, sanitation, health, and many other factors make or break a city. Numerical growth is a secondary but interesting item:

Date	Inhabitants
1800	215
1835	1,000
1870	5,095
1880	8,125
1890	11,250
1900	15,369
1910	20,550
1920	27,700
1930	34,422
1940	37,350
North Plainfield	10,588

Taking in Fanwood, Scotch Plains, Watchung, Dunellen, South Plainfield, New Market, Piscataway, and part of Metuchen, Plainfield is in 1942 the hub and center of between 60,000 and 70,000 people.

GLANCING BACK

A great deal of history has been made in the past three decades. In 1912-13 "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" truly prevailed. Let us take a glance at news items of early 1913 when this history originally appeared.

Life and living is exemplified by the advertisements of the day:

"A six room house with modern improvements—\$25.00."

"Houses and flats—\$12.00 to \$27.00."

"All the best grades of flour—\$6.00 per barrel."

"Five special reels moving pictures—10c."

"Eggs 22c per dozen."

"W. & J. Sloane—Genuine Oriental rugs \$8.00 and up."

"4% Interest on Savings Accounts."

"3% on Checking Accounts."

The "pursuit of happiness" is shown by social items, all within four days:

"Free dances continue at Washington School, with music furnished by a committee of young women, of which Miss Edith Mellick is chairman."

"Charming dance for debutante, brilliant social event given by Mr. & Mrs. Howard McWilliams, about 500 guests were present."

"Fancy dress for little folks, Mrs. P. H. Stewart & Mrs. F. W. Wallace entertain over 70 youngsters."

"Hebrew charity ball nets over \$1,000."

"Society gathers at Hartridge Auditorium, 300 guests, Mr. & Mrs. R. Henry Depew and Mr. & Mrs. Clifford Baker, gave a charming dance last night."

The cost of living and the course of happiness have changed a bit in thirty years. "Votes for women" was the burning question of the day. What the ardent females who fought for the vote think of the situation today is an open question.

Thirty years ago no American's basic right to liberty and free enterprise had been abridged. No licenses and permits were needed to hunt, fish, cut hair, shoe a horse, sell junk, or parade down the avenue. If one wanted to go to Europe, one needed the fare and nothing else. No birth certificate, no passport, no visas, no "necessity of travel" proof, no income tax receipts, no medical certificates of vaccination, and other serums were ever necessary. One simply bought a ticket, boarded the steamer, landed in Europe, travelled from one country to another, received a friendly reception everywhere and even wide credit on purchases and eventually came home to Plainfield. The shackles of government control and regimentation were unknown and unheard of, making a condition of freedom which the new generation knows little or nothing about.

Even the liquor question was not a serious municipal problem. There were maybe a dozen saloons, paying a high annual fee of \$1,000 each. License holders kept within the spirit and letter of the law. If they didn't they lost their license and nobody else got it. As the number of holders went down profits naturally went up for the remaining holders. It was good business to behave and this control was almost automatic in operation. Federal and State liquor czars were not needed.

The basic reason for foot free freedom thirty years ago was almost entirely economic. Compare 1912 with 1942 and measure your difference in living by the following yardstick of 1912:

The National Debt was three billion dollars.

There was practically no State debt.

The Plainfield Tax Rate was \$1.68.

There were no income taxes.

There were no inheritance taxes.

HISTORY'S RAPID COURSE

Life is never static. History is an ever changing panorama of politics and passion. The human race has still to learn that progress is, ever and always, the net result of PEACE AND WORK not WAR AND HATE. Unworried living ended in Plainfield in 1913.

The War 1914-1918 was the end of an era and the beginning of an economic whirlwind which is still blowing. The terrible loss of ten million men in the World War was doubled by the loss of twenty million others by influenza. Many books have been written about the war. Few books have been written about the influenza epidemic. War is easily and emotionally dramatized while the slow, steady battles of peace and the fight for existence are often unstressed and forgotten. Economic upsets also kill.

The decade following 1920 was the carnival of the golden calf. Our Federal Reserve System, allegedly designed to prevent panic, allowed speculative call money to go as high as 18%. Paper riches and paper credits disappeared over night, opening the door to another decade.

The events following 1930 upset every economic, political and social balance. The bell of warning on

every buoy of sanity, sense and sound thinking was stilled throughout the length and breadth of America. Homes and fortunes were swamped in the melee and material losses were enormous but they were as nothing compared with the cataclysmic breakdown of faith among men. When the Supreme Court invalidated the gold payment clause in contracts, then there opened up an hiatus of honesty and individual and international welching which has taken the moral fiber right out of every bond and contract the world over. The paradox of the situation is—that most men are incurably honest although set adrift on a sea of dishonesty.

GLANCING AHEAD

Most of us would like to emulate the old negro's prescription for happy living: "Never try to unscrew the unscrutable and always aim to co-optate with the inevitable." It is not the province of history to prophesy but no history can be brought down to the threshold of 1942 without setting down some unprecedented conditions which we all are forced to face.

Basically life is the business of making a living. Cultural and spiritual progress comes after bread and meat. Whether farm, factory, shop, or profession, we all continue to live and survive through business and the effort we put into it. Governments, whatever their form, are parasitic non-producers. Having no income of their own they exist on our incomes and all our incomes are derived from business. Strangely today government is crippling, hindering, and dis-

couraging every sort of commercial enterprise and venture and reducing individual initiative to zero. Beating and biting the hands which feed you is stupid if not dangerous. This animus toward commercial and financial enterprise is a staggering situation, fantastic to the point of complete madness.

There are many brilliant minds in our government. When silver is worth 35c per ounce there is 27c worth of it in our dollar. When our Treasury pays 35 silver dollars for an ounce of gold, it pays in specie value— $35 \times 27c$ or \$9.45 per ounce instead of the old standard \$20.00. On this shrewd basis we have practically cornered the world's gold supply, a gold corner which makes any past "Wall Street Operation" look amateurish and bungling. The brains which conceived this coup are the enemies of Wall Street, banking and finance. This cornered gold is said to be in Fort Knox, Kentucky. If it is, then it is the greatest aggregation of wealth ever collected under one roof. But there it is untaxable, while in circulation it could be taxed. Maybe our brilliant brains are too brilliant, time will tell.

Along with the rest of the nation, Plainfield is involved in an economic mess and tangle, with none of the old economic guide posts left standing. On and on it goes and where it will end nobody knows. Freedom of commercial action has been proscribed except for the farmer who can still plant one kernel of corn and reap 750 kernels. There are those who believe that the "least government is the best government" and another school who think that government is all in all and should control both life and living.

If the cancer of communism has eaten into our body politic with the intent and purpose to break and bankrupt us and then as a matter of salvation for government to take over all business, all real estate, all capital, and all farms by force majeure, then we all face an actual fight against confiscation.

This is unlikely as all virile religions have incorporated in their codes: "Thou shalt not steal." Also all ethical races since the beginning of time have set up human rights and property rights as one and inseparable. These beliefs still obtain here in New Jersey.

As Danton mounted the guillotine during the French Revolution he said: "Better to be a poor fisherman than meddle with the affairs of men." There is too much meddling today and it is still dangerous.

Plainfielders, along with all other Americans, stand at a pivotal point in American history. So also do the politicians who continue to deceive, mislead, and enslave mankind. Today will soon be tomorrow's history.

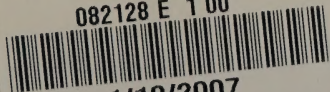
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